

WASHINGTON, DC – (June 7, 2010) Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) participated in a field hearing today in Chalmette, Louisiana on the “Local Impact of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.” The hearing was held by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Witnesses include family members of workers killed in the oil rig explosion and local business owners. Rep. Schakowsky and Reps. Bart Stupak, Bruce Braley and Donna Christensen also went on a Coast Guard flyover of the effected areas. The members got an aerial view of the site where oil is still gushing, visible evidence of destruction in the marshes, the oil slick in the Gulf, and the vessels involved in the cleanup effort. The smell of oil from the Gulf was also apparent. Rep. Schakowsky made the following statement at today’s field hearing:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very important hearing here in Louisiana. I am particularly glad to join my colleagues from Louisiana, Reps. Charlie Melancon and Steve Scalise.

“Over the last six weeks we have been reminded, once again, of the tremendous cost of our nation’s reliance on oil to meet our energy needs. The oil leak in the Gulf Coast is not only a human tragedy leading to the loss of 11 lives; it is also an economic disaster and an environmental catastrophe.

“I want to express my sympathy and support not only to the families of those brave workers who perished, but also to everyone who lives and works in the Gulf region. I want to express my gratitude and admiration for Natalie Roshto and Courtney Kemp, whose husbands died on the oil rig, and who had the courage to come here today in order to help us assure that no other

family has to go through what they have experienced.

“The Deepwater Horizon spill is a devastating reminder that the United States must implement a comprehensive energy strategy that weans our nation off of oil and spurs development of cleaner renewable sources like wind and solar power.

“But as long as we are drilling, we must assure that all current laws are strictly enforced. Where there are holes in our regulatory and enforcement structure, we must plug them with improved policies. If we fail to learn the lessons of this man-made tragedy it will inevitably happen again.

“I also believe that it is imperative that we raise or completely eliminate the cap on damages imposed on oil and gas companies, like BP, that cause environmental catastrophes. It is unconscionable that current law allows companies to make billions of dollars in profits, yet when an accident occurs the law protects them from paying for the damages they caused.

“But the point of today’s hearing is to learn more about the impact of the oil spill at the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig site on the Gulf region. With us today are representatives of some of the industries that are being hit the hardest by the spill.

“I want to thank each of you for being with us today. I can only imagine how difficult the last six weeks have been, but I want you to know that we truly appreciate hearing your perspective on this unprecedented disaster. I know you don’t want just our expressions of sympathy; you want action and we look forward to your suggestions.”